Left Caucus newsletter

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CHALLENGE OF THE SHORTER WORK WEEK

Ross Dowson
St. George

The delegates to the 1985 Ottawa convention turned back the Federal Council's key economic policy resolution on technological change. That resolution failed to even aention the shorter work week as a central aeans of preventing layoffs and providing jobs. They also voted to aaend it in accordance with a Left Caucus referral aotion.

In preparing resolutions for this coaing Montreal convention, if you looked up F.7.5 (pages 145-6-7) in the Resolutions Reference Book, you would be disappointed at the failure of the aaended version to reflect the stiaulating convention debate. The clause "shorter work week" is aerely inserted in one of the sentences - it is not at all developed or presented as a central aeans of preventing the layoffs, the shutdowns and aassive uneaployaent that now plagues us.

The true spirit of that debate was taken up by a group of workers at the Scarborough GM plant on January 10. About 1,000 aeabers of CAW Local 303 - a coalpete shift at the Eglinton Ave. plant were laid off last fall. Yet the company has asked those kept on to not only work their regular shift but to work overtiae on Saturdays. Their inforaation picket protested that the laid off shift be brought back; that the governaent aake coapulsory overtiae illegal, etc. The chairaan of the Local told the press he "couldn't work overtiae while others were on the streets."

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PROPOSALS ON LEFT CAUCUS FORUMS

Dorise Bolt
Eglinton

At its Deceaber aeeting, the Left Caucus Executive decided to hold public forums in conjunction with its regular aeetings to discuss aajor issues such as affordable housing, universal day care, equal pay for work of equal value, pornography, full eaployaent, contracting out, and disaraaaent. An inforaed aeabership is one which can effect change both at the Party level and in their ridings.

The March Federal Convention in Montreal will see a aajor debate on the question of language rights in the Province of Quebec. This was recently put forward in a resolution froa the Quebec wing of our Party. The Left Caucus has put together a forua to be held at the end of February to discuss this and other issues of concern to our Quebec brothers and sisters. Details of this forua are contained in this aewsletter. We look forward to your participation and would welcoae any suggestions you aay have for future forums.

QUEBEC NDP ON QUEBEC

How should the NDP respond to the national question in Quebec as it begins to sink its roots deeper and wider into the political culture of the Quebecois working class? This challenging question promises to be a major focus of discussion at the upcoming NDP federal convention. This issue was deliberated at the November 29, 1986 aeeting of the Left Caucus held in Toronto. A position paper was read by Quebec NDP Vice-President, Claire Brassard. This document is a statement of the position held by the Quebec NDP. We present a condensed version of the document below.(Editors)

Claire Brassard
Quebec NDP

For several aonths, Bourassa's Liberal governaent has endeavored to reopen constitutional negotiations with the stated objective of causing Quebec to becoae party to the 1982 Constitutional Agreeaent in exchange for concessions froa the federal governaent and the governaents of the other provinces.

Quebec is not responsible for the constitutional situation we experience today. The constitutional agreeaents of 1982 were the result of strong ara tactics against Quebec... Those agreeaents were aade in the back rooas and in the absence of Quebec. They are the expression of an unacceptable coercion against the people of Quebec.

Like a aajority of organizations, representative of the Quebec coaaunity, the Quebec NDP repeats that it does not recognize the legitiaacy of the 1982 constitutional agreeaents which were iaposed on the people of Quebec.

...Let us not forget that (the previous Parti Quebecois) governaent will go down in history as the one under which the rights of Quebeckers will have been shrunk the aost. We cannot forget that this disaster was also a consequence of the irresponsible strategy of this governaent which got involved in power; by short-circuiting the daaocratic processes which should have caused it first to subait its objectives to a thorough public debate and at the very least to seek approval froa the Quebec National Assebly; by skipping the essential step of a genuine aobilization of the people behind its objectives.

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HARRY KOPYTO VS. THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Will Toronto human rights lawyer Harry Kopyto hensforth be banned from appearing in Ontario's courts of law, OR, will the infamous law "scandalizing the courts" of which he has been declared guilty, be ruled unconstitutional and as a result removed from the Criminal Code? That is how Kopyto sees the issue posed to the Ontario Supreme Court when he appears before it on March 9 to appeal his conviction by a lower court.

That is what NDP MP Svend Robinson, speaking on behalf of the NDP caucus in the House of Commons, also declares to be the issue on March 9. Robinson told the Commons earlier this winter that he plans to "introduce a private member's bill to repeal this offence in the Criminal Code as well as call upon the federal Attorney General (Mr. Hnatyshyn) to grant immediatly a full pardon and vacate the conviction of Harry Kopyto who has so courageously fought this battle against the unjust law on behalf of all Canadians."

Kopyto was charged by the Ontario Attorney General's office and found guilty for his response to a Small Claims Court judge's dismissal of a suit that he had been pursuing for over 8 years on behalf of Toronto socialist Ross Dowson against the RCMP for its massive campaign of "dirty tricks" against groups and individuals of dissident opinion in the '70s. Kopyto told the press that the courts "are warped in favour of protecting the police."

The Harry Kopyto Defence Fund is seeking financial aid to be sent c/o

Harry Kopyto Defence Fund
c/o Ilar, Campbell & Associates
Barristers and Solicitors
136 Simcoe St., Suite 201
Toronto, Ontario M5H 3G4

CHALLENGE OF THE SHORTER WORK WEEK

Another is that everyone should benefit from the introduction of technological advances- not just those who happen to own the means of production.

The concept of a sliding scale - a sliding scale of wages, also known as an escalator clause and a cost of living bonus, which protects the basic wage with periodic and automatic increases, was established during the rampant inflation of the forties, fifties and into the sixties by major unions on the American continent and across Europe. In recognition of the miserliness of the Old Age Security payments to pensioners, Ottawa felt obliged to concede periodic increases determined by the cost of living index. When the Mulroney government talked of de-indexing the Old Age Supplement a couple of years ago the storm of protest drove it back.

The shorter work week, aside from its immediate urgency and benefits, has another merit. It links the immediate struggle to our objective of establishing a new type of society - a socialist democracy where not just the conditions of work but the very nature of work itself and all its rewards will be determined by ourselves by planning production not for profits but for the use of all.

QUEBEC NDP ON QUEBEC

The Quebec New Democratic Party feels that the future of Quebec cannot be entrusted to a party, even a government, but should be a project of the whole people of Quebec. We do not recognize the right of any party or government to negotiate Quebec's inclusion in the 1982 constitutional agreements without the prerequisites of a genuine democratic debate and the true exercise of the sovereignty of the people.

...The people of Quebec (should) be given not only an opportunity to affirm its existence and also its specificity, but also to determine the principles and means it deems necessary to defend its existence and promote its development. It will be in a position to express its will about the political, social, economic structure in which it wants to live and enshrine this structure in fundamental legislation--a Quebec constitution--having precedence over any other legislation.

For such a Quebec constitution to be truly democratic, an expression of the will and the power of the people, its drafting must be entrusted to a constitutional assembly of representatives elected by the various elements of the Quebec people. Finally, this constitution must be subjected to approval by the people through a referendum.

...The New Democratic Party of Quebec is committed to initiate the democratic process leading to the adoption of a Quebec constitution as soon as an NDP government is elected in Quebec.

It is only after ... the opening of a thorough debate resulting in a new consensus within Quebec society, and armed with the legitimate popular support which would result, that a Quebec government would be in a position to discuss with the rest of Canada the terms and conditions of a new Canadian union, if this is the freely expressed desire of the population of Quebec.

The approach we recommend ... leads to a basic renewal of the (Canadian) federation as we know it today. It leads to the elimination of any type of domination and coercion of a people over another within the union. It should, in the end, be translated and reflected in a new Canadian constitution decided on an equal basis between Quebec and the rest of Canada.

NDP MUST DEFEND RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Judy Rebick
Oakwood
A resolution calling on the federal New Democratic Party to launch a campaign to repeal the abortion law has been passed by several ridings and will appear in the resolutions book at the federal convention.
The resolution which asks all provincial governments to drop outstanding charges against doctors performing abortions under safe medical conditions and to legalize free-standing clinics has also been passed by both Ontario and BC Women's Rights Committees.
At the last federal convention, a resolution condemning the Manitoba government for busting the Morgentaler Clinic was kept off the floor. Thus the federal NDP has not taken a strong stand as a party since the abortion rights struggle heated up four years ago.
The situation facing women is critical across the country. We now have three provinces where it is virtually impossible to get access to an abortion. Doctors in Alberta are refusing to perform abortions until the government increases the medicare rates for the procedure. As a result women in Alberta are joining women in Newfoundland and PEI in being forced to go out of province to get abortion services.
In BC a new coalition to establish a free-standing clinic has just been founded The BC Women's Rights Committee is deeply involved in the coalition. The Supreme Court decision on the Morgantaler jury acquittal in Ontario is expected this spring.
In light of these developments a strong resolution making clear the party's unequivocal support for women's right to choose, for free-standing abortion clinics,and in support of the struggle of women across the country for abortion rights would be very timely. In light of past experience, it may take considerable organization to get a strong resolution onto the floor of the convention. It is vital that the abortion issue be a priority of both the left and the women's committees in the party.

THE NDP AND MILITARISM

Bill Clinton
Scarborough Agincourt
Gord Doctorov
Oriole
While most New Democrats support the party platform of unilateral withdrawal from NATO/NORAD, the party leadership has not voted against military budgets proposed by the Mulroney government.
Spending by the federal government's defence department has risen from 2.7 billion dollars in 1975 to 9.7 billion dollars in 1985, with the Conservatives increasing the budget by one billion dollars since 1984. Having increased the regular forces from 82,700 in 1984 to 84,500 this year, they have promised a further increase to 85,900.
The only beneficiaries for this wasteful expenditure of public largesse are the corporations that profit from war industries. As the antiwar party, the NDP's task is to argue for the alternative of production for use and on a planned basis to provide for jobs and technical progress.
Unfortunately, the party leadership's record on this score is counter to the aims of socialism. In particular, Mr. Broadbent's underwriting of a low-level NATO training flight base in Goose Bay Labrador flatly contradicts the party's hard-won position of opposition to the war alliance.
An unbelievably shameful adaptation to jobs through the war profit mentality has been displayed by none other than the NDP premier of the first province in Canada to be declared a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. Premier Pawley could not be out done as a strident partisan for Manitoba's bid to become a producer of an air defence anti-tank system with missile launchers for CF-15 fighter aircraft.
Surely it is time for the party leadership to oppose Mulroney's drive to fully integrate Canada into the U.S. war system.

THE LEFT CAUCUS AND YOU IN 1987

Lois Bedard
High Park
The Steering Committee elected at the 1986 Annual Meeting is functioning and wants to include you. How do we get in touch with you? Our address is:
ONDP Left Caucus
Station G,Box 92
1075 Queen St E.,
Toronto, Ontario.
M4M 1H0
Please send us on the attached form, your address and phone number.
Each forum costs $400 (approx.) largely due to photocopying and mailing costs, as we expect to book school auditoriums at no cost and all labour is volunteer.
If we carry out our projected 4/5 forums the cost will be around $2000. On that basis we are asking for a donation of at least $5.

THE LEFT CAUCUS— CAP CONFERENCE

Paul Hetherington
London Centre

On November 29, 1986 a conference was held by the Left Caucus and CAP. The day was well attended by members from Ottawa, London and points between.

Gord Doctorow was the first of four speakers. Gord spoke about the role of the left in Canada. He stated that the NDP must distance itself from the Liberals. He felt that it was important that the NDP follow through on its own policies. Citing examples which contradict our antiwar policy. The left must review and deepen its policies for workers and must have leaders who are true grass roots people who will carry on socialist ideology.

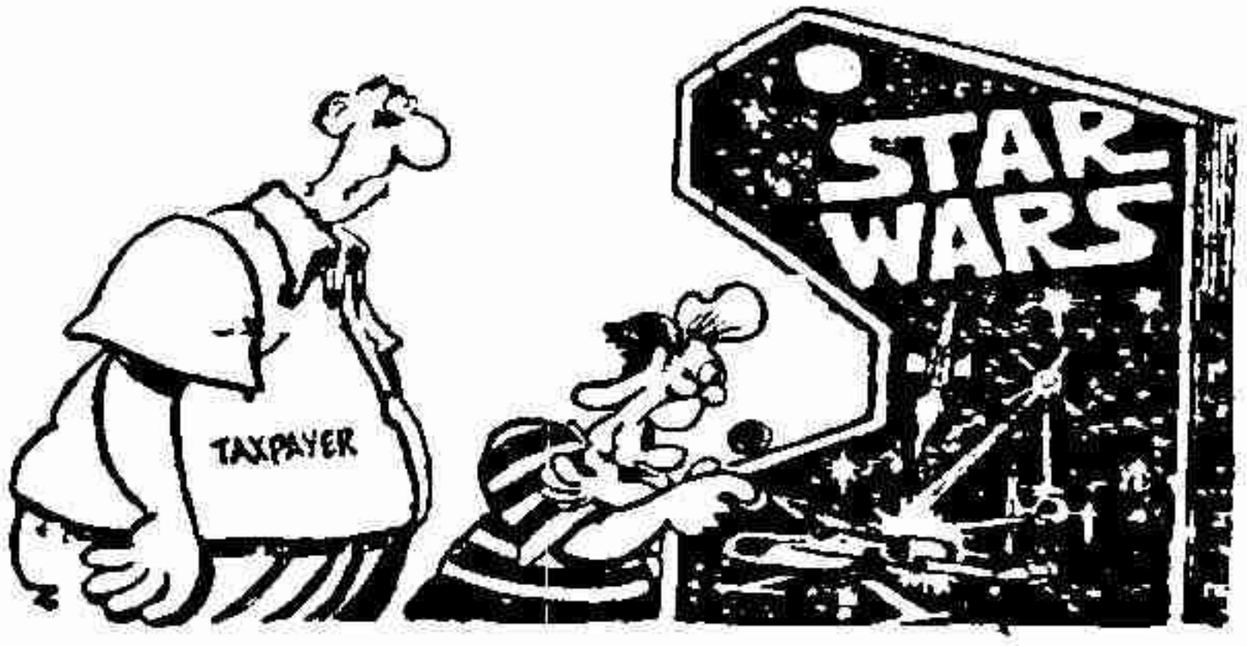
Claire Brassard, vice president of the Quebec NDP, spoke on the role of the NDP in Quebec. (See synopsis of her address elsewhere in this issue.)

The Toronto Disarmament Network campaign coordinator Steve Shallhorn spoke about Canada becoming more involved in the U.S. cold war. Canada is cooperating with the U.S. government in the testing of cruise missiles, and upgrading of airbases. The U.S. is looking towards Canada to provide it with more low level testing zones. Steve concluded by saying there is a need to get all peace groups involved in helping disband NATO and to get other NATO countries to support Canada's lead in this endeavour.

Judy Rebick spoke on the issue of choice. As the Supreme Court will decide (in the spring) on the Morgentaler case there is a need for the NDP to get firmly behind women in support of this issue. Across the country there is an increasingly more active anti-choice movement that must be stopped.

The afternoon was devoted to a discussion on the future role of CAP and Left Caucus. The final decision being that the two organizations should merge forming a unified left within the party to be known as Left Caucus.

The following positions on the Left Caucus steering committee were filled:
Co-chairs:Lois Bedard, Gord Doctorow.
Treasurer:Manfred Netzel.
Secretary:Dorise Bolt.
Newsletter:Paul Hetherington.
Forums:Diane Meaghan.
Female Members at Large:
Esther Bissoon, Judy Rebick, Tina Zink.
Male Members at Large:
Bill Clinton, Harry Kopyto, Dave Tomczak.
Youth-Male Jeff Smith.
Youth-Female Vacant.



"QUICK—GIMME A HUNDRED TWENTY BILLION QUARTERS!"

Left Caucus newsletter

OHDP Left Caucus
c/o 58 Ashburnham Road
Toronto, Ontario
M6H 2K3

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STOP CLOSURES SAVE OUR PLANTS

By Ross Dowson
St. George - St. David NDP

While Statistics Canada records unemployment to be 9.3 percent, the lowest level in five years, it remains the most threatening problem confronting workers -- resulting in a profound malaise from coast to coast.

In Newfoundland, it stands at 26.4% -- resulting in a population growth in that period of only 668 in a total of 568,349, due to its populating other parts of the country with its 18- and 19-year-old internal refugees.

While the job situation is most favorable in Ontario, it is the area of greatest unease. Threatened by a plague of layoffs -- both temporary and long term --

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DEFENCE DEBATED AT LEFT FORUMS

By Gord Doctorow
Oriole NDP

This has been an auspicious year for Left Caucus forums. At the end of February, a forum under the joint sponsorship of Left Caucus and the Metro Toronto Labor Council, was held with Jean-Paul Harney speaking on Quebec and the constitutional question to an audience of some 80 people. Harney was emphatic about the exclusive right of the people to decide constitutional arrangements. He denounced the idea that elected politicians, no matter what political stripe, should exercise the right to decide such matters. He reiterated many of the themes presented in the Quebec NDP discussion paper published (in condensed form) in the last issue of the Newsletter. Only the people of Quebec through a constituent assembly and referendum can properly decide their constitutional fate from a

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ACCORD ENDING: NDP MUST GO LEFT

By Harry Kopyto
Oakwood

While federally the NDP is showing dramatic possibilities of challenging the establishment parties on clear programmatic lines, its performance in Ontario threatens a sorry contrast.

Though the Tories remain in a disunited and demoralized state, still licking their wounds after being unceremoniously turfed out of power in an unexpected debacle, the Liberals, who to everyone's surprise, won the election, appear to be consolidating themselves as a dynamic and potent reform force.

The present high-ranking status of the Liberal Party is, to a large extent, the product of the NDP's commitment to the Accord; that is, to ONDP leader Bob Rae's effort to make minority government work in Ontario. The Accord not only compromised our party's image as an independent political force, but gave the Liberals the progressive veneer which has enabled them to consolidate popular support and emerge as a dynamic force on the political scene.

The Liberals have done the minimum needed to retain their credibility by implementing major portions of the Accord, even taking a turn to the left to gut the NDP of some of its support, though not going beyond the limits of their own program of making capitalism work. The NDP, in turn, has defused any possibility of emerging as an alternative against the Liberal Party as they have done federally.

By bolstering the program of the Accord as its sole or major contribution to Ontario politics, the Rae parliamentary caucus has gravely undercut the relevance of the NDP. The Liberal Party's program, which the Accord basically represents, has become our leadership's be-all and end-all. The ultimate absurdity of this turn to respectability and to the right has been demoralization of our rank-and-file, open desertion of caucus members to the Liberal party and the revelation that important and influential leaders within the party want it to become integrated

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STOP CLOSURES SAVE OUR PLANTS

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and, worst of all, in the form of complete plant shutdowns and closures, thousands of older workers are being forced into premature retirement, onto welfare, etc. Others are forced to seek new jobs at lower rates of pay and with inferior working conditions.

The supreme confidence expressed by the Liberal and Tory apologists of Big Business that the private sector alone, and left to its own devices, can be counted on to get things rolling again, is proving to be completely fraudulent. The layoffs and closures are becoming so extensive that the grab bag of government schemes to ameliorate the situation is proving to be totally inadequate and even they are being cut back.

The Ontario branch of the federal government's Employment and Immigration Commission helps to finance joint labor-management committees designed to find work for those losing their jobs due to mass layoffs or plant closures that in many cases devastate entire communities. In the past year, 2,876 workers in 42 Ontario companies sought the help of the joint committees. Jobs were found for 2,190, some 113 were placed in training programs while another 61 retired from the work force, leaving 512 unemployed when the committees closed their books. The Commission admitted that the "only expanding areas of employment are in the service industries . . . but wages are invariably lower there than what workers have been earning."

Breaking with the Liberals and Tories on an Ontario Legislature committee studying closures and layoffs late in March, the NDP issued a dissenting report in which it scored the Liberal government for being more interested in placating the business community than in protecting workers. Mass layoffs and closures in the past five years have resulted in the permanent loss of 125,000 jobs in Ontario, according to their report. Of the 8,000 job losses already announced in 1987 -- over 70% involve shutdowns of U.S.-owned plants -- they note, and warn that the possibility of a free trade agreement with the U.S. will quicken the pace of U.S.-based plant shutdowns.

The demand for a shorter work-week with the same take-home pay is key in a struggle for jobs for all. This proposal, to be won through union contracts with employers, has been endorsed by the organized labor movement. Only the mobilization of its mighty forces in a coordinated campaign could win this just demand which would go a long way in assuring everyone the right to work and a decent standard of living. Successes by the organized workers in the private sector would help establish through the provincial labor codes a shorter legal work week and a higher minimum wage for those workers in the public sector.

But what about those workers who are threatened with losing their jobs due to plant closures and shutdowns? So far, the leadership of organized labor has limited itself to verbal protest against closures but in actual fact it is accepting them. Having done so, it is attempting to win whatever concessions possible from the corporations with regard to who, and on what terms, will get the few warehousing jobs that the corporations decide necessary to service their Canadian market, just who might be able to take advantage of a preferred status to hold a job in other plants in their corporate empire, and to improving the severance settlements for the now jobless work force, not to mention the new generation coming into it.

This path can only result in the de-industrialization of the country and the impoverishment of its workers.

It is completely unacceptable that the Etobicoke Goodyear operation, along with the rights of the workers and their families be sacrificed by a unilateral decision of the Akron corporate heads to meet expenses incurred in fighting off an opponent corporate takeover in the U.S. through liquidation of the Canadian branch plant.

While the Liberal and Tory political agents of capital have jumped on the global privatization bandwaggon to allow Big Business to cash in on the inflated value of previously nationalized industries, with astonishing cynicism Prime Minister Mulroney has opened up the Ottawa treasury to appease the voracious appetit e of the world's corporate giant General Motors. He has knuckled under to their blackmail demand for a $220-million interest-free loan to refurbish their Quebec assembly plant.

Public ownership of key and strategic industries, this time under the democratic control of those who work them, is now surely on the order of the day.

CAUCUS NEEDS $3,000 BY FALL

By Lois Bedard
High Park-Swansea NDP

The Ontario NDP Left Caucus announces that it is out to raise the sum of $3,000 for its coming Fall activities. We want to put a solid foundation under the Newsletter and the Toronto forums. Over the past year, we have expanded the Newsletter both in size and contents making it more diverse and increasing the possibility of widening its circulation.

Our last issue, with its synopsis of an address to a Left Caucus conference by a Quebec NDP leader on the NDP-Quebec party's position on the constitution, was circulated to the delegates to the Montreal federal convention. In addition, Toronto supporters took the initiative to photocopy copies on their own to circulate to leading antiwar movement activists participating in the Toronto April 25 anti-nuclear-arms mass action. This opened up discussion on the proposal that the NDP MP's should challenge the government over its allocation of millions of dollars for the construction of a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines to establish Canadian sovereignty over northern Arctic waste lands.

We also want to build up our bi-monthly forums. The one featuring Quebec NDP leader Jean-Paul Harney attracted 85-90 persons and the May forum held in an Etobicoke school on plant shutdowns featuring the presidents of the Goodyear rubberworkers and the Sunbeam electrical workers locals there provided a serious political discussion in the course of an important class-struggle event.

In order to help supporters raise their contributions and space them out, we are suggesting you send us post-dated cheques made out to the Ontario NDP Left Caucus, c/o Treasurer Manfred Netzel to our post office box at Station M, Box 107, Toronto, Ont. M6S 4T2.

TORONTO FORUMS

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democratic and socialist point of view, he argued. A lively and informed discussion followed.

March saw a debate on Canada's defence policy between Harry Paine, co-chairperson of the NDP Antiwar Committee, and Philip Jones,

Quebec's Jean-Paul Harney

president of York West NDP riding association and the riding's candidate for the next provincial election. Harry argued that Canada should be out of NATO and NORAD as a way of acting against the drive to nuclear war. From the point of view of conventional defence, he opposed a military budget on the grounds that in the age of nuclear warfare conventional forces are obsolete, that the Russian people are not our enemy, and that the real enemy of Canadian working people are the capitalist parties and governments and their corporate backers. If a civilian defence were required, he would opt for a popular militia organized through such groups as trade unions and other pro-working class organizations.

While Philip concurred with the party's official policy of opposition to NATO and NORAD, he believed that a beefed-up conventional army would be necessary as a practical measure to defend Canada's sovereignty, for example, against a U.S. threat should Canada elect an NDP government in Ottawa. He argued that a Swiss or Swedish style of armed neutrality would seem as a more practical policy to the Canadian people than the disbanding of the armed forces. He felt that the cost of such a proposal was outweighed by the need for a well-armed Canadian state.

A most interesting and heated discussion from the audience ensued which spanned many historical examples and arguments of principle. It was a stimulating evening.

The May forum was on the topic of plant closures and layoffs featuring Dave Birrell, president of united Rubberworkers Local 232 at Goodyear in Etobicoke, Ken Scourfield, president of United Electrical Workers Local 566 at Sunbeam in Etobicoke, and Ross Dowson representing the Left Caucus in his capacity as a longstanding veteran of trade union affairs and labor journalist. The theme was a labor strategy to fight back.

ED BROADBENT REBUKES NDP MPS

By Bill Clinton
Scarborough-Agincourt

NDP leader Ed Broadbent has gone so far as to publicly rebuke three NDP MP's for daring to speak out against U.S. President Reagan's outrageous and provocative speech in Canada's Parliament during his recent Ottawa visit.

The three MP's, Svend Robinson, John Parry and Les Benjamin, protested Reagan's arrogant and provocative assertions, delivered as a privileged guest in a foreign Parliament, about his government's Strategic Defence Initiative and its intervention in Nicaragua. While addressing the House of Commons, Reagan referred to the policy of the Nicaraguan government as one of a number of "brutal wars of Communist governments against their own people." Parry and Benjamin responded to this flagrant lie by crying out "Shame!"

Robinson protested, "Stop funding the Contras, Reagan!" When Reagan claimed that his "SDI supports and advances the objectives of arms control, offering a more stable and secure environment," Robinson echoed the sentiment of the labor and peace movements -- indeed of very many ordinary Canadians -- when he called out, "No way. Stop Star Wars now!" Broadbent heard but said nothing.

However, he made it publicly known that he vehemently disapproved of MPs' protests and upon arriving in Rome to attend a conference of the Socialist Inbternational, he announced that he had phoned them to censure them for their remarks. In doing so he imitated the conformist behavior of the pro-imperialist leaders of the two bosses' parties. Liberal leader John Turner who is unabashed about supporting the U.S. military machine's testing of Cruise Missiles on Canadian soil, said that he was "embarrassed" by the MPs' protests, and Prime Minister Mulroney led his Tory MPs in a sycophantic standing ovation for Reagan in Parliament.

The socialist wing of this party unapologetically and gratefully identifies with the principled behavior of Svend Robinson, Les Benjamin, and John Parry.

PREVIEW TO MEECH LAKE

NDP RALLY ON QUEBEC QUESTION

By Diane Meaghan
Markham Delegate to Federal NDP Convention

Scandals are plaguing both the Mulroney Tories and the Liberal Party Official Opposition, while the federal NDP is riding high on the results of a recent Gallup poll that put the party's popularity at an unprecedented 33%. With hopes rising for the NDP to become the Official Opposition in the next federal election, delegates at the NDP convention in Montreal were urged not "to make waves" but rather to participate in a showcase designed by the leadership to play up the party's growing popularity in Quebec. The show, orchestrated by Broadbent and accentuated by the speech delivered by CLC president, Shirley Carr, was intended to provide a rather slick, media-oriented affair. Carr urged the 1400 delegates in attendance "to stay near the centre" so as to not jeopardize party hopes.

Nonetheless, the issue of special status for Quebec was hotly debated at the convention, both off and on the floor. With the convention being held in Montreal, as the party's star rises in Quebec, the status of the Quebec NDP and, in particular, the principled leadership around Jean-Paul Harney was considerably enhanced. Thus the Quebec NDP, with its policy of protection of French language rights and constitutional change by means of a popular constituent assembly and a popular referendum, was strengthened by the process of an otherwise apolitical convention.

The vaguely formulated compromise resolution that the federal leadership had worked out with the Harney leadership was designed by Broadbent to reassure the anti-nationalists that English linguistic rights and confederation would be preserved while the Quebec NDP could interpret it as a firm commitment by the party in defence of Quebec rights and, above all, French language rights. Hence Harney could denounce the Meech Lake Accord while Broadbent, who supported it in principle, publicly conceded his right to do so. Following the convention, Broadbent stated that "more often than not there are nuances of difference that cause the provincial party to take one

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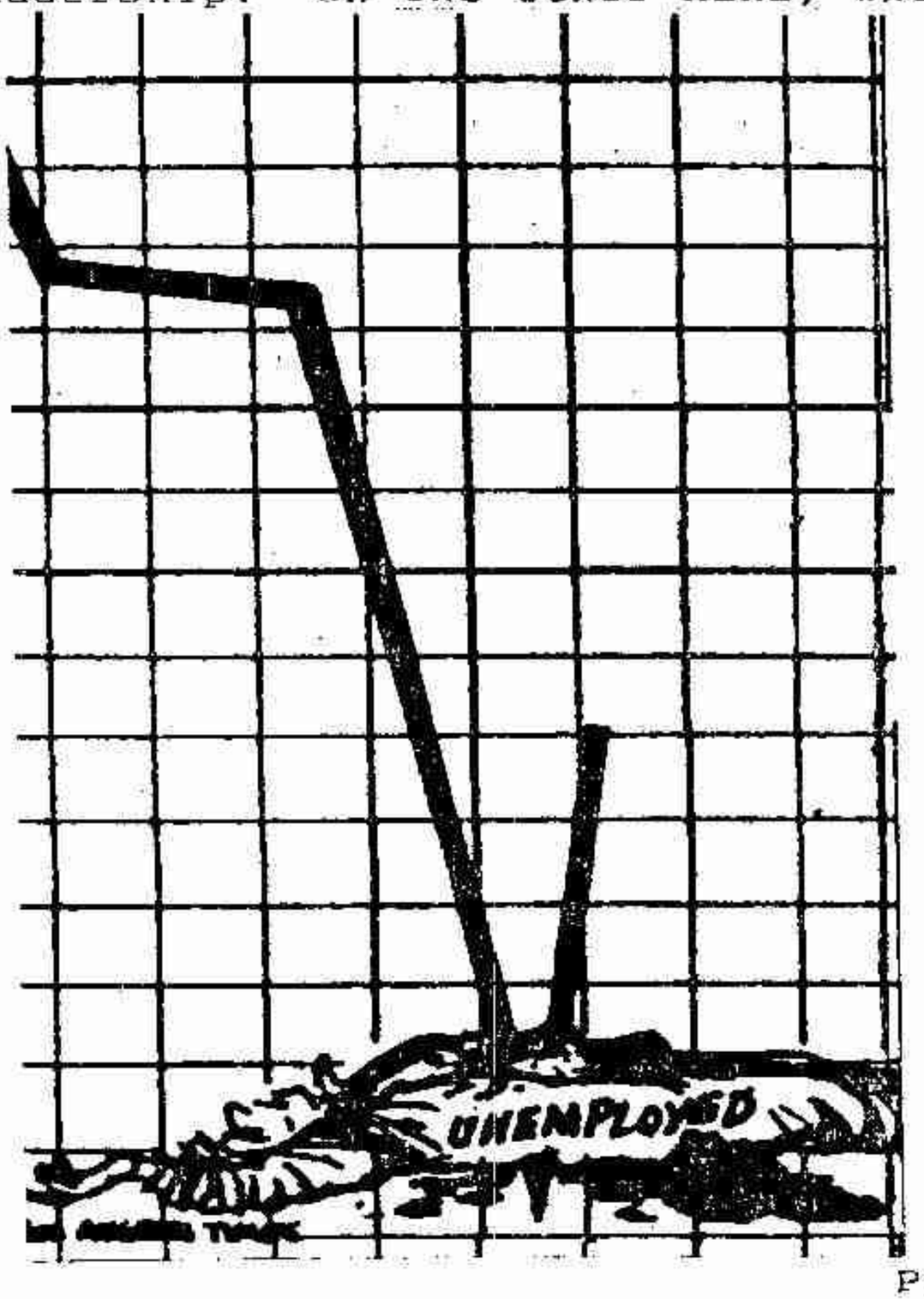
position, and we take another", in response to questions asked about the rejection of the accord by Harney.

Harney, however, stated in May that the constitutional deal "is unacceptable and will mortgage the province's future." Harney's legitimate dissent centres on the view that the Meech Lake Accord weakens the position of Quebec and fails to provide Quebec with full responsibility over language. Unfortunately, Broadbent's response is one that in no way distinguishes him or the NDP from the capitalist politicians. He said "there are what could be called strong nationalists on the Quebec wing who don't like (the accord), as opposed to what might be called the strong central government emphasis on the other side ... and most other Canadian, *from all other parties* right now -- are somewhat in between."

This indicates the contradictory situation of the federal NDP top brass. On the one hand, Broadbent has immense popularity and the party is moving forward under a mildly reformist leadership. On the other hand, the



party's rank and file have asserted their will in formulating left positions on policy with respect to the Quebec question, opposition to NATO and NORAD, nationalization of a major bank, and many women's rights issues.

While the leadership urged the delegates to stand pat and not to move left or right and to enjoy themselves, the left of the party was able to play an important but modest role. Two meetings of Left Caucus supporters attended by about 40 people in each were held. The first discussed the issues to be brought forth by the women's caucus, particularly a resolution to urge the party to support free-standing abortion clinics and to drop the charges levelled at doctors who perform abortions outside of hospitals. The second meeting addressed the issue of special status for Quebec -- giving Quebec a limited veto on certain constitutional changes, the right to opt out of federal spending programs with financial compensation and the recognition of the uniqueness of Quebec, especially with respect to guarantees concerning language and culture. Some members of the Quebec Caucus worked with Left Caucus members in an attempt to bring a stronger resolution to the floor calling for Quebec to have exclusive jurisdiction over language.

While the resolution failed, the agenda slot of 15 minutes for the "Quebec question" was expanded to a two-and-a-half hour debate through the coordinated efforts of the Left Caucus that provided a forum for the unbridled feelings of many delegates concerning Quebeckers' control of French-English rights in the province.

Finally, it must be said that the convention clearly underscored the labor-oriented character of the party. It was reflected in Shirley Carr's complete identification with the NDP and its electoral success, particularly in light of the weakened position of the labor movement on the bargaining front. The Gainer's strike was a defeat, the Eaton's organizing drive a fiasco, the CAW lost in Michelin, and plant closures are continuing. No wonder the trade union leadership increasingly looks for political solutions to shift the balance in the economic struggle.

NDP MUST GO LEFT

Continuation from page 1

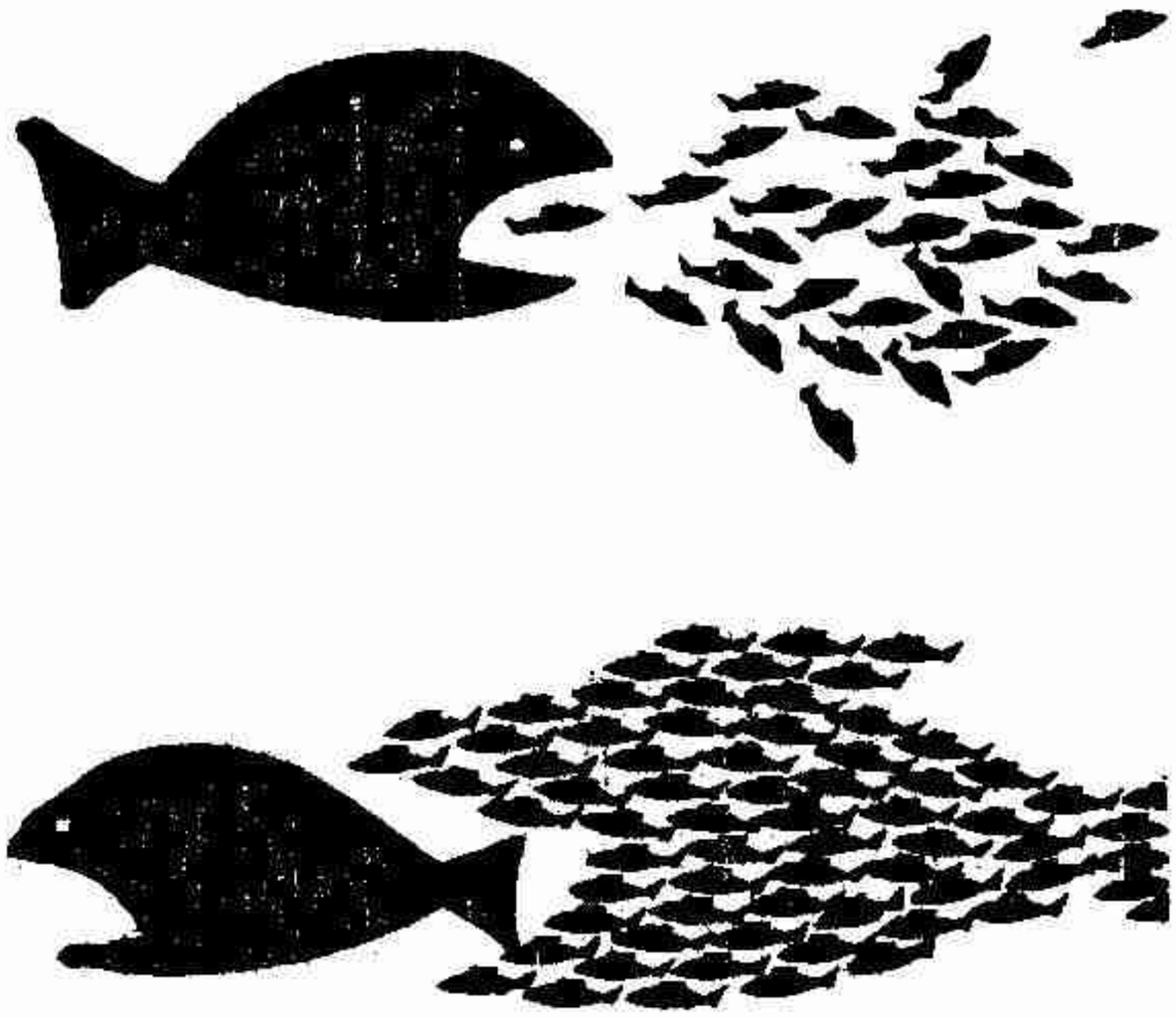
into the Liberal cabinet.

The Left Caucus warned almost two years ago that the Accord both reflected and would contribute to the weakening of the party. Unfortunately, the prediction has been validated. There is a universal sense of impending doom as the upcoming election draws nearer -- ironic at a time when the real possibilities for advancement are reflected so sharply outside of the province by our unprecedented gains in the polls and recent election victories.

Which way forward? Certainly not by running our campaign on the theme that the Liberals have failed to live up to their promises, which by and large, in the public mind, they have kept. Such a theme is bound to further reduce us to the sidelines. What is needed is the resurrection of our own program, the reaffirmation of our own identity, the reconstitution of our party in the public mind on its own distinct program.

Such a redevelopment of our program has been posed by the Party's recent paper placing the blame for the massive plant closures on the corporations who profit from the misery inflicted by these actions. The program must be sharpened and focussed even more--to lay bare the haphazard nature of capitalism and to call for public ownership of runaway plants. Equally our program on other key issues--foreign domination of our economy, free trade, social issues--must be taken out of the closet where we have kept it mothballed for two years.

The banner of the NDP, the call for a government of our party on our program must be raised. The choice is clear--a turn to the left or political debilitation in strategic Ontario for years to come.



Left Caucus newsletter

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Bulletin IDOM-June/87

This statement is being circulated for additional signatures in Britain by the Moscow Trials Campaign, 46 Princes Way, London SW 19. We are publishing it here for the information of our readers. The committee is also seeking financial support.

CLEAR THE NAMES OF THE ACCUSED IN THE MOSCOW TRIALS

IT IS now over fifty years since the infamous Moscow Show Trials. It is astounding that at a time when the Soviet government is at pains to emphasise its concern with 'human rights' and proclaims the need for 'glasnost' — 'openness' — the accused in these trials, with a few exceptions, are still considered guilty of being paid agents of Nazism, and other crimes.

Among these men were numbered several who played outstanding roles in the Russian Revolution of 1917. The reputations of founders of the Soviet state like Zinoviev, Radek, Trotsky and Bukharin were besmirched or expunged from the history books. Today, no-one doubts that the 'confessions' at the trials — the sole basis for the prosecution — were utterly false. Seven defendants in the third trial, Krestinsky and others, have been both judicially rehabilitated and politically exonerated. So have the military leaders, Tukhachevsky and others, whose military trial in 1937, was held in secret. But the admittedly false evidence against these men was inseparable from the charges against all the other accused.

None of the accused, of course, is alive today. Many were executed immediately after their trials. Others died in prison or camps. Leon Trotsky, the chief accused in all three of the trials, was murdered in exile in 1940. However, families of some of the defendants are still living in the Soviet Union. Some had also suffered imprisonment and exile. It is worth recalling that a review of all these cases was promised by Khrushchev, but this promise was broken.

We the undersigned therefore call on the Soviet government to re-examine the cases against all these victims of the perversion of Soviet justice, as took place with Krestinsky. We are confident that all those accused in the Trials of 1936-1938 will be shown to have been innocent. They should immediately be rehabilitated, their honour restored, their families compensated and their graves marked.

Tariq Ali
Sydney Bidwell, MP
Paul Boateng
Sam Bornstein
Fenner Brockway
Raymond Challinor
Jeremy Corbyn, MP
Terry Davis, MP
Meghnad Desai
Tamara Deutscher
Linda Douglas
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Mildred Gordon
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Eric Heffer, MP
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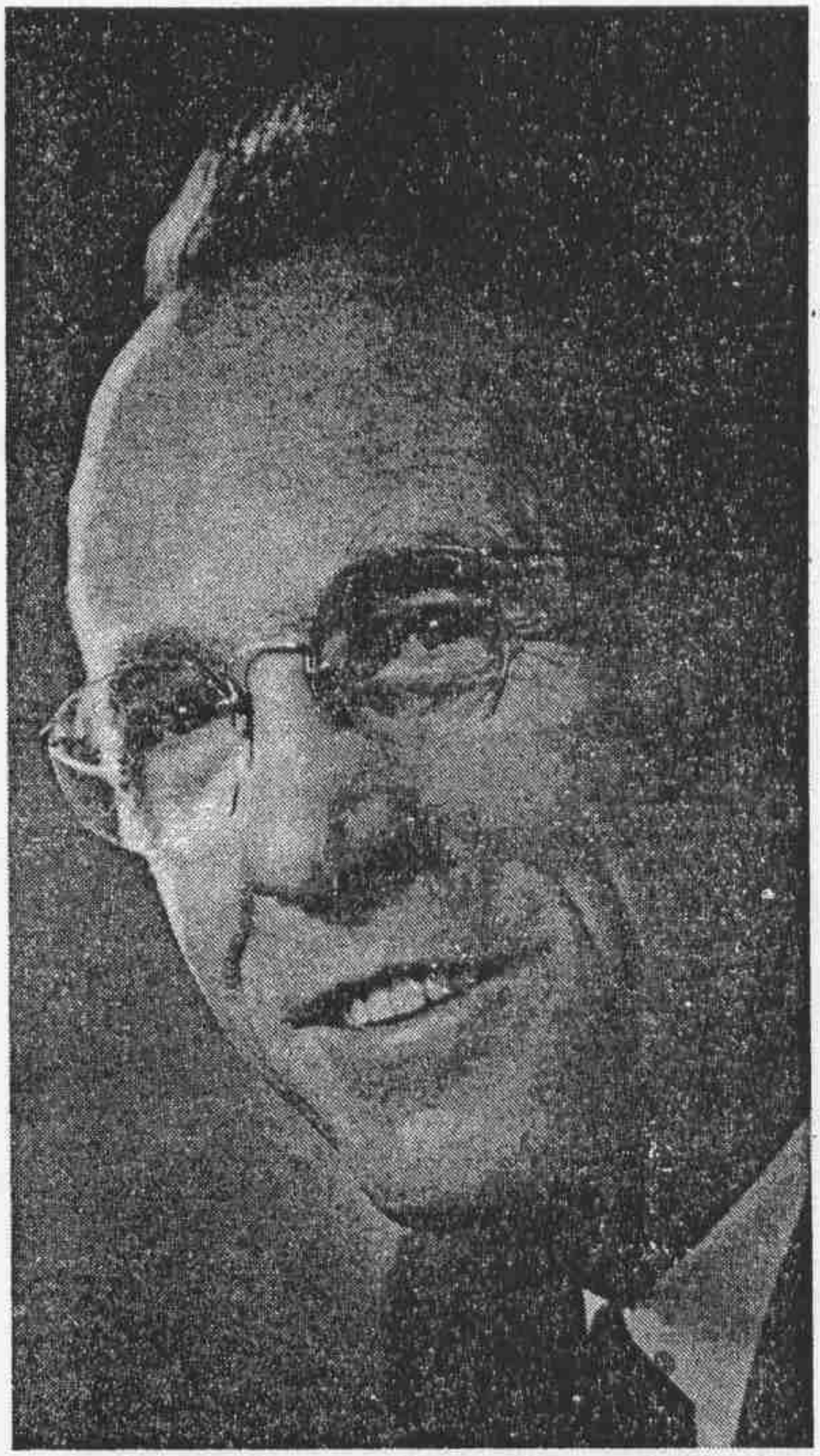
Ian Mikardo, MP
Stan Newens, MEP
Brian Pearce
Felix Pirani
Al Richardson
Frank Ridley
Cyril Smith
Harry Wicks
David Winnick, MP
Charlie van Gelderen

Of Mice and Men

THE DAY THEY STOPPED ELECTING CATS TO GOVERN MOUSELAND

The following excerpts from a speech by Mr. Douglas, leader of Canada's New Democratic Party, before the constitutional convention of the United Steelworkers at Miami, Fla., have been widely reprinted in labor publications and it is a pleasure for the LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEER to give them further distribution as a matter of interest to members in both U.S. and Canada..



I just met one of my friends coming into your convention this morning. He was a coal miner. He dug coal in the mines of Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, from the time he was 13 years of age until he was elected to Parliament. He and I sat in the House of Commons together.

He used to tell the story about Mouseland. He said Mouseland was a place where all the mice lived. Mice were very much like men. They had good days and bad days, times when they were happy and times when they were sad. And like me they also had a Parliament or a government.

Every four years they went to the polls and they used to elect a government — of big black cats. If you think that is strange, you only have to read the history of government in many parts of the Western world to think that maybe mice aren't any smarter than men.

I don't want you to think that these black cats were dastardly creatures. They weren't. They were nice clean cats. They were fat cats and they gave good government and they passed good laws. There were good laws for cats. But the laws that were good for cats weren't always good for mice.

One of the laws they passed, for instance, was that mouse holes had to be big enough so a cat could get his paw through them. Another laws was that in the morning when cats were a little sleepy, mice would only travel at half speed so a cat could get his breakfast without too much exertion. All the laws the black cats passed were good laws for cats, but they were very hard on mice. The mouse population kept dwindling.

The mice had enough of this and when the next election came around, they went to the polls almost to a man and they voted the black cats out. They put the white cats in. The white cats, of course, had fought a terrific campaign. They said, "The trouble in Mouseland are those round mouse holes. You put us in and you will get square mouse holes." They got square mouse holes. The square mouse holes were twice as big as the round mouse holes and now a cat could get both paws in. More mice disappeared.

In the next election they put the white cats out and went back to the black cats. V they couldn't stand it any n they tried the white cats a(They even tried one go(ment of half black cats anc white cats. It didn't make difference. The trouble w the color of the cats, the ble was they were cats.

After a while one little m got up on a little soap box he said, "Look, fellow r What do you want to keep ting cats to make law: mice?" They said, "He Bolshevik! Lock him up!" locked him up. And languished in prison, he fi died. They thought that we end of it.

But, my friends, it is as tr mice as it is of men. You ca a man who has the idea, bu can't kill an idea. Once an is born in the minds of free it never dies.

All through Mouseland, in the dark corners, the would say to one another. you remember that queer guy, Joe? You know, he n be right. Why don't we mice to make laws for mi So, at last, all thro Mouseland the story sprea til the day came, as the da come, when the mice did to elect mice to make law: are good for mice, not for

That, in simple languag why we formed a Democratic party in Cana party which believe: democratic economic p ing, designed to increas wealth production of the n by promoting economic g: and providing for employ It is a party which is pledg use its country's incre wealth production to living standards and to im educational, health and w services.

By Tommy Douglas

THE LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEER.
December 28, 196?